



CAMBRIDGE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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Date: December 31, 2014
To: Members and Alternates of the Historical Commission
From: Sarah L. Burks, Preservation Planner
Re: D-1356: 29 Highland Street (Hubbard House, 1922)

An application to demolish the house at 29 Highland Street was received on December 16, 2014. The applicant was notified of an initial determination of significance by the director, and a public hearing was scheduled for January 8.

Site & Existing Condition

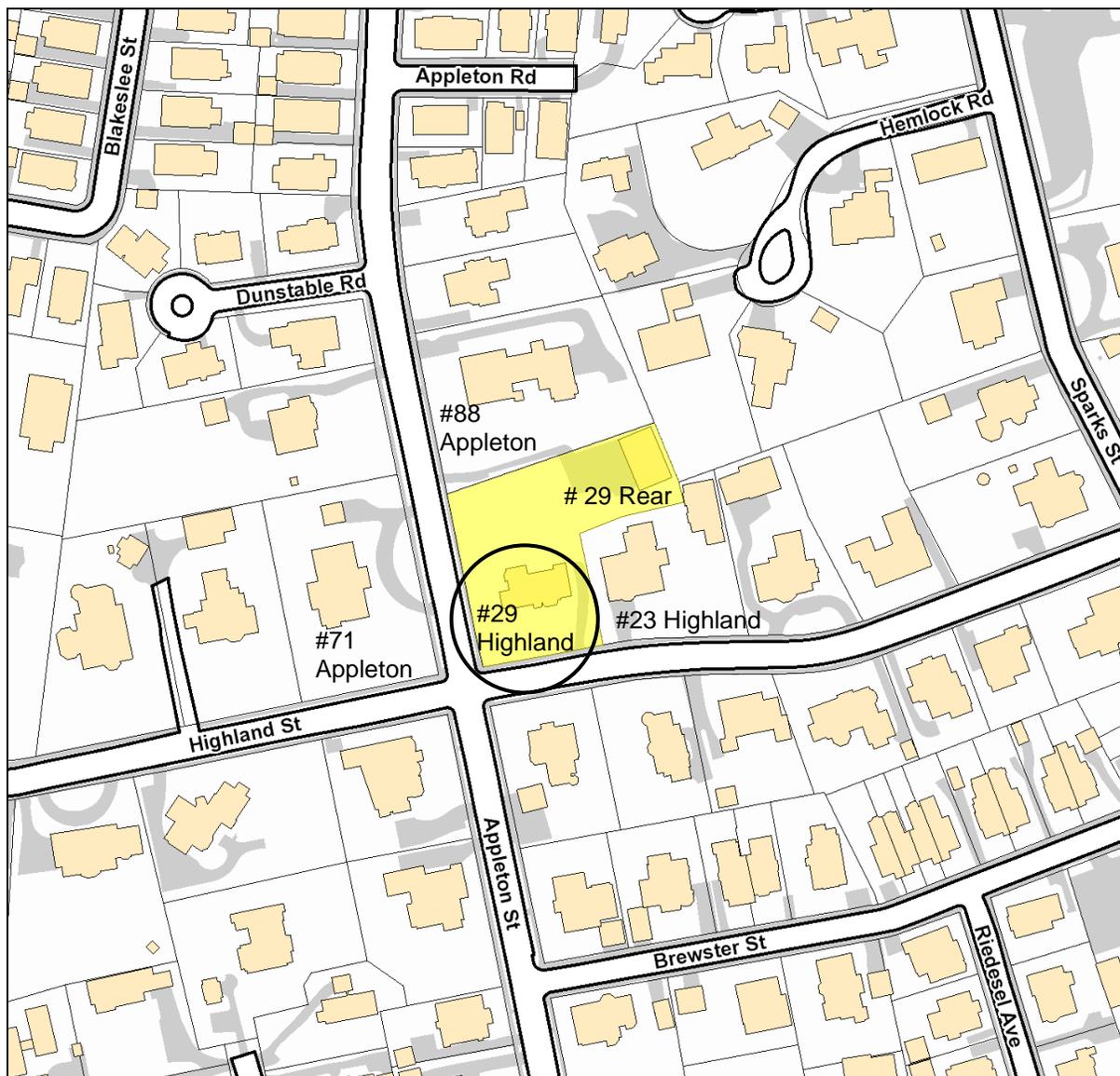
Twenty-nine Highland Street is located on the north side of Highland Street at the corner of Appleton Street. The 2½-story house shares a 30,629 square foot L-shaped lot with a detached carriage house converted to a dwelling (29 Rear Highland Street), to its northeast. The lot is located in a Residence A-1 zoning district, a single-family district that allows an FAR of .50 and a minimum of 6,000 square feet per dwelling unit. The height limit in this district is 35 feet. The Residence A-1 district is the lowest density district in the City. New residential structures in this district are limited to detached single family dwellings.

The assessed value for the land and both buildings (Map 231/Parcel 44), according to the online assessor's database, was \$3,465,200. The house was sold by the heirs of Celia Hubbard to the Highland Street Cambridge LLC in August 2014, for an undisclosed purchase price.

The existing site plan includes a driveway to the east of the house (#29) to access the carriage house dwelling at the back corner of the lot (#29 rear). The carriage house is situated with non-conforming setbacks on two sides, and it is not proposed for demolition. The front house has conforming setbacks, being closest to the property line of #23 Highland Street on the east side with a 20 foot setback.

Twenty-nine Highland Street retains its original materials of brick, wood windows, porches and trim, copper flashing and a slate roof. It appears to be in very good condition though general maintenance and repairs are due in areas such as the chimney, flashing, and the sleeping porch.

The proposal is to demolish the Colonial Revival house and construct a modern new 2-story house designed by the architectural firm of Stern McCafferty. The new house would be set back further from Highland Street to be more centered on the lot. The proposed house is designed in a modern aesthetic with a flat roof and a mixture of natural materials such as stone and wood accented with metal canopies. The proposed height is 26' to the cornice.



29 and 29R Highland Street, Cambridge GIS

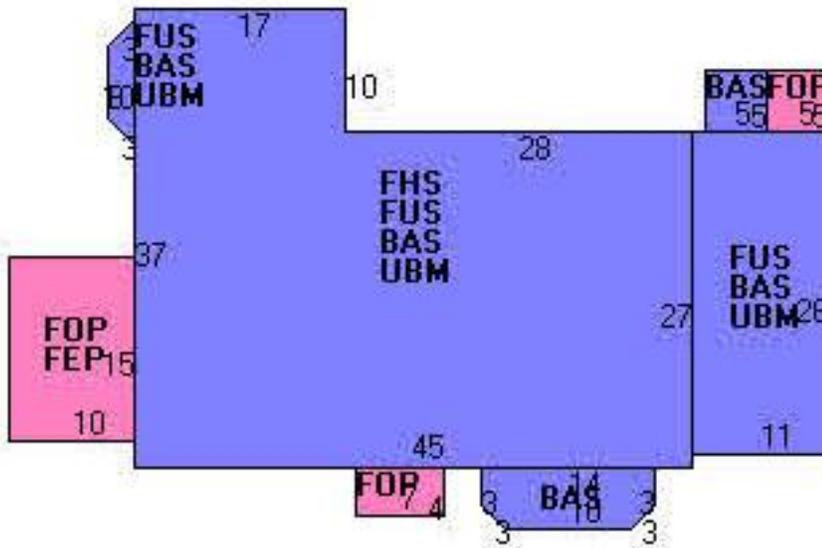
Architectural Description

The existing home is a 2½-story, five-bay, side gable Colonial Revival house. The main volume of the house is flanked by a 2-story wood sleeping porch on the left (west) and a 2-story wing on the right (east). The exterior is clad with brick and the roof and dormers are covered with slates. The center entry is accented with a wood portico with an arched ceiling supported by slender Corinthian columns. A Federal-style fan light and side lights surround the front door. Heavy dentils adorn the cornice.

The fenestration is balanced but not symmetrical. On the first floor to the left of the entrance, are two 9-over-6 double hung sash with arched brick lintels, and to the right of the entrance is a double-width projecting bay window. The second floor features paired 6-over-6 windows on the left and right and a single 6-over-6 window over the door. The three hip-roofed dormers on the front roof plane have paired 8-light casement sash.



29 Highland Street front elevation, staff photo, Dec. 31, 2014



Plan view, Cambridge Assessing Department



29 Highland Street front elevation, staff photo, Dec. 31, 2014



29 Highland Street, west elevation, staff photo Dec. 31, 2014

History

The Hubbard property was originally part of the 25-acre estate of Judge Joseph Lee that stretched from the Watertown Road (now Brattle Street) to Vassal Lane. His house, now 159 Brattle Street, was the only Tory mansion that was adapted from an older building (1684 Hooper House); it is now the headquarters of the Cambridge Historical Society.

Lee, the son of a Boston shipbuilder, was a member of the Tory aristocracy through his marriage to Rebecca Phips. During the siege in 1775 he lived in Boston, but he was allowed to return to his estate and bought an additional 4¾ acres in 1783. At his death in 1802, he left his property to his nephews Joseph and Thomas Lee, Jr. In 1803, Thomas bought out his brother and built the present house at 153 Brattle Street.

John Appleton, the former U.S. consul in Paris, purchased Judge Joseph Lee's house (159 Brattle Street) and the western half of the Lee estate in 1808, while Lee's descendants, the Carpenters, kept the eastern half of the estate, including Thomas Lee's house (153 Brattle Street). Appleton Street was laid out in 1858, when Deborah Carpenter sold the upper portion of her remaining property to John Brewster. The first house on the street (88 Appleton Street) was built near the top of the hill in 1859 for William Read, a Boston hardware merchant.

Eliot Hubbard purchased the William Read estate in 1922 (which included both 88 Appleton Street and the corner lot that is now 29/29R Highland Street). The Read heirs included Annie Read Lambert, who lived at 23 Highland Street in a house she commissioned from Peabody & Stearns, well known Boston architects, in 1888 (altered 1949-50; renovated 1997). The same firm also designed two adjacent carriage houses for Lambert and her father, William Read, in 1895. Lambert had been active in the suffrage movement in Massachusetts for many years.



88 Appleton St, assessor's photo. Built as Mansard in 1859; remodeled in Colonial Revival style in 1922.

The house at 88 Appleton Street was originally a 2½-story, center-entrance Mansard style house with flush board siding. It was thoroughly remodeled by Eliot Hubbard in 1922, adopting elements of the Colonial Revival style and changing the original Mansard roof to a low hip roof. Other major changes at that time included the removal of the south facing porch and reorientation of the house to face Appleton Street.



www.mutualart.com, "Eliot Hubbard and his son, Eliot Hubbard, Jr." oil painting by Albert Lynch. This painting was auctioned by Grogan & Co. in August 2014 as part of the Celia Hubbard Estate collection.

At the same time, architect Allen W. Jackson designed a new house at 29 Highland Street, on what had formerly been the south lawn of 88 Appleton Street, for Hubbard's son, Eliot Hubbard, Jr. Ownership transferred to the younger Hubbard in 1924. The board-and-batten carriage house (1895) that had serviced 88 Appleton Street was sold as part of the 29 Highland Street property. The carriage house was altered in 1922 and then adaptively remodeled for a residence in 1970 (now addressed as 29R Highland Street).

Allen Jackson was a specialist in English Tudor architecture and the most prolific Arts and Crafts practitioner in Cambridge, designing over thirty houses between 1903 and 1939. An 1897 M.I.T. graduate, Jackson traveled abroad before beginning practice in Boston...Jackson's first design in Cambridge was his own half-timbered house at 202 Brattle Street. He combined stucco, half-timbering, and brick surfaces with a variety of steep projecting gables, flared roofs, heavy rough-sawn and carved wood trim, and leaded casements to create what he termed a modern American adaptation of an English tradition that expressed on the exterior something of the interior arrangement. Free from the restrictions of the symmetrical Georgian style, his design was malleable enough to incorporate "the most incongruous matters under one roof", including the city's first private garage within the body of a house.¹

While Jackson himself preferred the more fluid forms of the Tudor style, by 1922 Colonial Revival was the dominant style in American domestic architecture and clearly

¹ Sullivan, Charles and Susan Maycock. Manuscript for the forthcoming publication *Building Old Cambridge*.

the preference of his client, Hubbard, who was also remodeling 88 Appleton in this style. Jackson achieved a balanced and stately façade at 29 Highland Street without trying to copy the symmetry and simplicity of the Cambridge's Georgian colonial homes. Born in Newton, Jackson lived in Cambridge until 1936, when he moved to Lincoln, Mass. to be near one of his sons. He died there in 1949 at age 74.

Eliot Hubbard, Jr. (1893-1977) attended Harvard College, was an officer of the Lampoon and graduated, A. B., in 1915. He then attended Harvard Medical School, graduating with honors in 1919. He worked as a pediatrician at Children's Hospital in Boston from 1922-1949. He also taught pediatrics at Harvard Medical School for many years. He married Elizabeth Freeman Thaxter, daughter of Harvard Professor of Botany Roland Thaxter and Mabel Gray Freeman, in 1917. They had two sons and one daughter, Celia. Dr. Eliot Hubbard, Jr. died in 1977 at age 83.²



Photo of Celia Thaxter Hubbard. *Boston Globe*, August 29, 2013.

Celia Thaxter Hubbard (1920-2013), who was named for her great grandmother the New England author Celia Loughton Thaxter, lived in the converted carriage house at 29R Highland and was the most recent owner of the 29-29R Highland Street property until its sale in August 2014 to the Highland Street Cambridge LLC. Celia Hubbard was an artist, art gallery owner, and promoter of contemporary religious art. Raised in Cambridge, she later attended the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston and the New School for Social Research in New York City. She worked in New York City and France before returning to Cambridge. Her gallery, the Botolph Group, was located on Newbury Street in Boston from the 1950s until 1971. Though raised Protestant, she converted to Catholicism in the late 1940s and was active in the redesign of churches following Vatican II in the early 1960s. Together with artist Rita DeLisi, Hubbard opened an art school called Project, Inc. which taught art to students of all ages. The school closed in 1984. She died at age 92 and is buried in Mount Auburn Cemetery.³

² "Eliot Hubbard Jr. was pediatrician, Harvard professor," *Boston Globe*, January 29, 1977, p. 24.

³ Lawrence, J. M., "Celia Thaxter Hubbard, 92, of Cambridge; gallery was hub of expression," *Boston Globe*, August 29, 2013.

Significance and Recommendation

The house at 29 Highland Street is significant for its architecture as a well crafted example of the Colonial Revival style designed by prominent Cambridge architect Allen W. Jackson. The building is also significant for its important associations with the Hubbard family of Cambridge. It is the staff recommendation that the structure be found significant for these reasons. I recommend that the Commission review the proposal for new construction and hear public testimony before making a further determination.

cc: Ranjit Singanayagam, Inspectional Services Commissioner
Highland Street Cambridge LLC